

Fast Facts About Kentucky Bluegrass



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Ever wonder how the most commercially valuable cool-season turfgrass in America got its name? Kentucky bluegrass, or *Poa pratensis*, is neither blue, nor did it originate in Kentucky, at least not the varieties that most are familiar with. But there is a believable explanation of how this species got its name.

European settlers are generally thought to have brought seed of the species with them when they established their homesteads in central and northern Kentucky in the 17th and 18th centuries. Kentucky bluegrass grows well as a pasture grass on the limestone soils of the region. This cool-season, sod-forming perennial grass is also palatable for grazing animals. And that's thought to be one of the reasons it was established in the central and northern regions of Kentucky.

As previously mentioned, the species, like all familiar grass species, is green. But in areas where common meadow grass is allowed to grow to its mature height of 2 to 3 feet, the plants put on small silvery-blue flowers.

If you get the privilege of visiting eastern Oregon or northern Idaho, where Kentucky bluegrass (many different cultivars) is grown for the commercial production of seed, you will be delighted at seeing the waving mature grass plants just prior to harvesting. Whether you see blue or not, it's a beautiful sight.

Kentucky bluegrass is the most commercially valuable cool-season turfgrass in America. It's almost universally found on lawns in much of the Midwest and Northeast. Turfgrass breeders are constantly working with the species, seeking varieties that are ever-more attractive, durable and resistant to stresses, such as heat, drought, insects and diseases.

Few of these varieties are being developed and tested as a pasture or forage grass. Palatability isn't a characteristic homeowners, sports field managers or golf course superintendents value.